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# Book Marks

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# BOOK MARKS

Featuring summaries of books written by Furman faculty and alumni, as well as reviews of books recommended by faculty and staff as "good reads."

## RECOMMENDED

Enrique Krauze (translation by Hank Heifetz), *Mexico, Biography of Power* (HarperCollins, 1997). Subtitled *A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*, this monumental study offers a fascinating account of the politics and personalities that have formed our Southern neighbor. Mexico's history of violent political and military revolutions and its conflicts between rich and poor, government and workers, and church and state illuminate our own history. Although many historians reject the "great man" approach to history, Krauze convinces the reader that for Mexico, which was formed by strong and idiosyncratic leaders, it is singularly apt. His biographical narratives bring to life the revolutionary generals Benito Juarez, Emilio Zapata and Pancho Villa, all of whom are still among the country's national heroes. Yet he is just as effective in explaining the context and importance of the policies and characters of Lazaro Cardenas and Miguel Aleman, among others, who formed the contemporary nation.

— Judith Bainbridge, *English*

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Scholastic, 2003). I thought Rowling had finally crossed the line. As I read through this captivating book, I created long lists of both arcane vocabulary actually in the dictionary and of Rowling's own linguistic creations, such as *Metamorphmagus* (someone who can change appearance at will). I thought this, the wonderful storytelling notwithstanding, would repel some male readers. I was wrong again. In book 5 of the Potter series, the evil dementors are bad dudes whose attacks suck out all hope and happiness and cause the assaulted wizards to relive the worst moments of their lives.

Worst of all is to be kissed by a dementor. As Harry explains to his malevolent Uncle Vernon, a Muggle (non-wizard): "It's what they call it when they suck the soul out of your mouth." This is the point at which the moral detectives responsible for "scourging" (Rowling's word) children's literature rend their clothes and scream. But Rowling's imagination is mesmerizing and has forever changed all the rules.

— Tom Cloer, *Education*

Kathryn Carlisle Schwartz, *Baptist Faith In Action: The Private Writings of Maria Baker Taylor, 1813-1895* (University of South Carolina Press, 2003). In her biography of her grandmother, the author mines an impressive array of primary documents to offer an important contribution to our understanding of 19th-century Southern womanhood. She focuses on Maria's life from the years of her marriage to John Morgandollar Taylor in 1834 in Beaufort, S.C., to her later years in Marian County, Fla. Maria's pithy diary entries provide an inside view of the duties and household tasks she unquestioningly assumed as mother of 13 children and mistress of 68 slaves. Schwartz's assessment of Taylor's day-to-day experiences, household responsibilities and interactions with plantation slaves supports the views of many historians that plantation mistresses were anything but ladies of leisure.

— Diane C. Vecchio, *History*

Peter W. Atkins, *The Periodic Kingdom: A Journey into the Land of the Chemical Elements* (Basic Books, 1995). In almost every chemistry classroom, a big chart — the Periodic Table of Elements — adorns one of the walls. Formalized in 1869 by Dimitri Mendeleev, it maps our chemical universe. The author of this book takes full advantage

of this geographic metaphor by turning it into a simile. He likens the Periodic Table to a formidable but entirely explicable landscape. Elements are grouped into "regions," each region has its own "products," and scientists who explore these regions are "cartographers." Atkins' combination of scientific insights and literary imagination works wonderfully. Readers with no prior background in chemistry will find his approach immediately engaging, and even those with more extensive knowledge can benefit from the book's final chapters (especially one called "Regional Administration"). Atkins demonstrates that science possesses an often-neglected aesthetic dimension. By employing an interdisciplinary perspective, he brings this dimension to life.

— Scott Henderson, *Education*

## FROM FACULTY

Gilles O. Einstein and Mark A. McDaniel, *Memory Fitness: A Guide for Successful Aging* (Yale University Press, 2004). Do all adults experience memory difficulties as they age? What is the difference between normal memory change and the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease? Is it possible to stop or reverse memory decline? This book is a comprehensive guide for the growing number of adults who are eager to learn how aging affects memory and what can or cannot be done about it. The authors, well known for their research on memory, explain how memory works while providing techniques and strategies for improving memory, physical and mental exercises that can enhance memory, a review of drugs and nutritional supplements touted to enhance memory, and a discussion of Alzheimer's disease, its symptoms and risk factors, along with suggestions for caretakers.

Einstein chairs the psychology department at Furman; McDaniel is psychology chair at the University of New Mexico.

## FROM ALUMNI

Rachel Sherwood Roberts '62, *Art Smith: Pioneer Aviator* (McFarland & Company, 2003). This biography recounts the life and times of one of the early stars of aviation who thrilled audiences with his death-defying aerial feats. The publisher says that had Smith "not died in 1926, his name probably would be familiar to most Americans. He glamorized and popularized aviation while testing the boundaries of aeronautical principles. . . . After Smith's death, when Lindbergh flew over Fort Wayne and dipped his wings, he gave credit to the 'Bird Boy' Art Smith."

The author lives in Auburn, Ind. Her other books are *Crisis at Pemberton Dike* (1984) and *Auburn is a Dancing Lady* (1999), and her work has been featured in regional and national publications.

Tony Waters '80, *Cinnamon's Busy Year* (All About Kids Publishing, 2003). The author, who lives in Charleston, S.C., also illustrated this children's book. According to the publisher, it tells the story of Cinnamon and her friends, Tootie and Pip, who "never have a dull moment when there are festivities galore every month of the year." Whether they are flying kites in spring or enjoying a summer wedding, "the year is overflowing with joyous occasions. With Valentine's Day, the Fourth of July, Halloween, Christmas and more, Cinnamon discovers that there is always a reason to celebrate." Among Waters' other children's books are *The Sailor's Bride* and *The Moon Smiles Down*.